Press release

Extreme weather - Met Office opens new innovation centre

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Does a cold snap really affect our health? Could there be snow in the Riviera in the summer of 2010? Can a mobile phone warn whether to get out an umbrella?

All these questions and more will be answered in the Met Office's new Innovation Centre, which opened this week in Bracknell.

Professor Richard Duggan, innovation consultant and former Senior Innovation Advisor for the DTI, opened the centre, which displays the Met Office's ability to innovate in the past, present and future.

"The Innovation Centre is an exhibition of Met Office aspirations, products and services as well as an environment where we can work with our customers and other stakeholders to develop innovative solutions which will enable future growth for us all," explained Peter Ewins, Chief Executive, Met Office.

The brand new creative conference centre is a window into the most exciting and innovative developments at the Met Office, revealing that this organisation, which may historically have been perceived as slow and bureaucratic, does much more than just predict the weather.

Illustrating the changing character of this institution familiar to us all, the Met Office has just recently scooped a high profile award for innovation with its new personalised weather messaging service, launched last November. The Time & Place service was the winner in the 'Most Innovative Service-Mobile Internet' category at the Mobile News Awards 2001.

The new centre displays, for example, how the Met Office is researching for the MOD how environmental stresses can create tensions that lead to international conflict, and working with the NHS to predict rises in illness caused by the weather. It also features climate change and illustrates quite graphically how Europe's climate will be affected if the Gulf Stream shuts down.

Notes:

Professor Duggan has a long history of involvement with innovation. He was part of the Government Advisory Committee on innovation back in the late 1980s, before joining the DTI and working with them as a Senior Innovation Adviser for eight years. He currently works as an innovation consultant and has played an active advisory role in helping the Met Office develop the Blueprint for Innovation..

For further information:
Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680

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